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News

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Nearly Nine Million Dollars for Voluntary Conservation Programs Available for Vermont Farmers and Landowners

*Colchester, VT.....*State Conservationist Judy Doerner today announced that nearly nine million dollars will be available to Vermont farmers and landowners in 2006 for voluntary conservation programs on working lands.

“Conservation on private lands is an important priority for USDA. We are fulfilling that commitment by responding to the needs of agricultural producers to provide more certainty and predictability in their environmental stewardship decisions before planting season begins,” said Doerner. “This early release of funds ensures that Vermont farmers have more time to make sound decisions regarding their conservation practices.”

(MORE)

With financial assistance from NRCS, farmers will continue to address resource concerns on agricultural working lands, promote environmental quality, address challenges in water quality and quantity, protect prime farmland and grazing lands and protect valuable wetlands ecosystems and wildlife habitat.

Key voluntary conservation programs and allocations include:

Conservation Security Program (CSP): \$ 66,800. CSP supports ongoing stewardship of private, agricultural working lands and rewards those producers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations. **This will fund existing contracts.** Funds for CSP signups will be allocated at a later date.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP): \$4,175,333. EQIP assists farmers to improve soil, air, and water quality and other related resources on private working lands.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP): \$254,674. WRP helps landowners restore, enhance and protect wetlands through permanent easements, 30-year easements and restoration cost-share agreements. The program maximizes wildlife habitat and wetland functions and values.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP): \$3,014,082. FRPP provides matching funds to state and local governments and non-governmental organizations such as land trusts to purchase conservation easements.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP): \$1,389,254. WHIP offers technical and financial assistance through long-term agreements to create, restore and enhance wildlife habitat for upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened, endangered or at-risk species and fisheries as well as other types of wildlife.

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center or NRCS field office located in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture or go <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs> on the Web.